

TOWN MANAGER
Ken Deal

TOWN CLERK
Pamela Mills

TOWN ATTORNEY
Tom Brooke



MAYOR
Lee Withers

TOWN COUNCIL
Arthur Heggins
Brandon Linn
Rodney Phillips
Charles Seaford
Steve Stroud

CHINA GROVE PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Minutes of Regular Meeting

Thursday, March 21, 2019

The China Grove Planning Board met on Thursday, March 21, 2019 at 7:00 PM at the China Grove Town Hall, 333 North Main Street, China Grove, North Carolina.

Planning Board Members Present: David Morton, Chairman
Butch Bivens, Vice Chairman
Jason Higgins
Natalie Morgan

Planning Board Members Absent: Jason Hinson
Brie Bivens-Hager
Rodney Phillips

Staff Present: Pamela Mills, Town Clerk
Franklin Gover, Assistant Town Manager

Visitors: Lee Withers, Mayor

Roll Call and Recognition of Quorum

There being no quorum, Chairman Morton called the informational meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Approval/ Corrections of Minutes

Mr. Higgins made the motion to approve the February 21st, 2019 minutes. Mr. Bivens seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Adoption of Agenda

Mrs. Morgan made a motion to amend the agenda with the addition of a discussion on a Historic District to Other Business. Mr. Bivens made the motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Higgins seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Text Amendment Discussion

a. Chapter 11 – Digital message Board Signs

Mr. Gover stated he is proposing a text amendment for Electronic Message Board or Digital Signs. He stated this is for on-premise free-standing digital signs only. He stated there is a concern about the brightness of digital signs for churches in residential districts. He stated the current regulation states a new commercial sign within 100 feet of an existing residential structure shall not be illuminated between the hours of 12:00 midnight and 6:00 am.

Chairman Morton asked if that is a measurement from the sign or the property line. Mr. Gover stated it is a measurement from the sign.

Mr. Gover stated the current regulations state flashing signs, signs with flashing or reflective disks, signs with flashing lights or lights of changing degree of intensity or color or signs with electrically scrolled messages (except government signs and signs which give time and temperature information) are prohibited. If a time and temperature sign alternates between a time messages and a temperature message it shall continuously show one message a minimum of three seconds in time before switching to the other message. He stated the proposed amendment would state flashing signs, signs with flashing or reflective disks, signs with flashing lights or lights of changing degree of intensity or color are prohibited. If a sign alternates between messages, it shall continuously show one message a minimum of one minute in time before switching to the other message.

Mr. Gover stated government signs are exempt but we would follow the rules as close as possible.

Chairman Morton stated at some point these types of signs were allowed. He stated the church at 326 North Main Street received a permit and installed a digital sign.

Mr. Gover stated the areas of regulation starts with brightness. He stated we need to decide options for Day and Night. He stated we need to keep the measure in foot candles. He stated this would depend on the square footage of the sign. He stated we only allow signs to be 32 square feet. Chairman Morton stated he has no problem allowing the signs to remain lit. He stated he sees where a digital sign could be a night light nuisance in a residential area. Mrs. Morgan stated she believes the signs in a residential area should be dark but in the highway business district or central business district they could remain lit.

Mr. Bivens stated residents could use these digital signs as a land mark and they could be more useful at night. He stated he believes the signs should remain on at night.

Mr. Gover stated the current language for hold time is 3 seconds or less. He stated this hold time is considered flashing. He suggested increasing this to 1 minute. Chairman Morton suggested 15-20 seconds. Mr. Higgins stated from a safety standpoint you want people to read it but not get distracted.

Mr. Gover stated the transition duration should be instant and no fades. He stated the transition method should have no animated transitions. Mrs. Morgan stated instant could be interpreted as a flash.

Mr. Gover stated the current language for the area is regulated in 11.4. He stated there is no needed to change the maximum sizes. He stated the proposed amendment is that electronic message centers shall only be permitted as an accessory to an on-premise freestanding sign, and limited to no more than 50% of total sign area. Chairman Morton stated 50% could be too large of a threshold. He stated the message sign at 326 North Main Street is 4x8 including the top cap. He stated if the message panel is any smaller the message would be hard to read. Mrs. Morgan stated as long as they are meeting the lumens then she sees no reason to limit the space.

Mr. Bivens asked if there will be a height limit. Mr. Gover stated 10 foot maximum on freestanding. He stated he wants to limit digital signs for freestanding only. Mrs. Morgan asked if there is a height limit on vertical digital signs. She stated vertical signs could be a good option in the downtown area where horizontal signs could impede the sidewalk. Chairman Morton stated we have a narrow street scape. Mr. Gover stated the current language for the location of signs states no freestanding signs in downtown area, but civic uses in the Central Business district are allowed to have freestanding signs. He suggested removing the wording that freestanding signs are allowed for civic uses.

Mr. Gover stated the next section talks about nonconforming signs. He stated if an individual wants to add a message center sign to a nonconforming sign then this would be a significant change and the sign would need to meet current standard before the message center was added.

He stated the next amendment would be to the definitions section for Appendix A to clarify what an Electronic Message Center is.

Chairman Morton asked if the town wanted to add digital signage to the existing signs at the entrances of the town. Mr. Gover stated it has come up and we could do it now since civic use is exempt. Chairman Morton asked Mayor Withers what the board is wanting to do with these signs. Mayor Withers stated with the Ketchie Street sign he does not feel a digital sign would fit there being a 45 mile an hour road. He stated there has been discussion of having a welcome to the Southend District sign at the Southend of town. He stated we don't know what the intersection is going to look like on the Northend of town.

Other Business

a. Historic District

Mrs. Morgan stated she has reached out to the Historic Registry for a project downtown for an individual client. She stated the state asked her if we considered redistricting the area. She stated when the survey was done for the railroad the surveyors flagged it to the state. She stated due to the age of the town now we could have a Historic district. She stated they laid out a potential area that homeowners and businesses owners could look into if they could be a part of the district.

Mrs. Morgan stated it takes a lot of effort to have an attractive downtown. Mayor Withers stated Duke Energy has gave the town an estimate of \$750,000 on moving the power lines downtown from Patterson to Church and take the lines back to Franklin Street. He stated this could be the first step in making the downtown district more attractive. Mrs. Morgan stated that is the first thing that West Jefferson did.

Adjourn

Mr. Higgins made the motion to adjourn. Mr. Bivens seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

David Morton
Chairman

Pamela L. Mills, CMC
Town Clerk